

KING COUNTY CAREER SUPPORT SERVICES PROGRAM

Department of Executive Services

Resume Writing



King County

CAREER SUPPORT SERVICES PROGRAM



RESUME WRITING GUIDE

Career Support Services Program

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What is a Resume?

Resumes are what people use to get jobs, right? Wrong!

A resume is a one or two page summary of your education, skills, accomplishments and experience. Your resume purpose is to get your foot in the door. A resume does its job successfully if it does not exclude you from consideration.

To prepare a successful resume, you need to know how to review, summarize and present your experiences and achievements on one page. Unless you have considerable experience, you do not need two pages. Outline your achievements briefly and concisely – your resume is your ticket to an interview where you can sell yourself!

So, what is the right resume for me?

Resume Styles ~ When to and when not to use them

Style of Résumé	Advantages	Disadvantages
<p>Chronological: A chronological resume starts by listing your work history, with the most recent position listed first. Your jobs are listed in reverse chronological order with your current or most recent job, first.</p> <p><i>If you're not sure whether to use a chronological or combination resume, then use the functional resume format.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employers typically prefer this type of resume because it's easy to see what jobs you have held and when you have worked at them.• The progression of your career is easy to follow since the chronological resume lists jobs in a timeline sequence.• A chronological resume highlights not only your job position or job titles but also the organizations you've worked for in the past.• It is believed to be more fact based. <i>(The advantage here is that the chronological resume carries with it a lot of credibility in the eyes of the hiring manager or recruiter.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your work experience is listed in reverse chronological order.• Gaps or breaks in your work experience timeline stand out.• Allows potential employers to figure out if you've been switching jobs every couple of years. <i>(This is something they might not like in a job candidate.)</i>• It's nearly impossible to hide your age from potential employers. <i>(This can be a big disadvantage for both younger and older job seekers.)</i>• When you have been doing the same thing too long.• When you have been absent from the job market for a while.

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<p>Functional: The functional resume places a good deal of emphasis on what you know and what you've accomplished rather than where you've worked. This allows the reader to see all of the skills, accomplishments and qualifications of the job applicant presented in a logical fashion</p> <p>It is used most often by people who are changing careers or who have gaps in their employment history.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If your career path is not immediately apparent, then a functional resume can help conceal that perceived "problem." • When you've had employment gaps in your career, a functional resume can help to cover up those gaps. Unlike a chronological resume, you don't need to show where you've been in the past. • If you are "overqualified" or are looking upwards from your past jobs, then a functional resume can help to emphasize your skills and avoid bringing attention to job titles. • When much of your work has been freelance, consulting, or temporary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The big disadvantage is that the hiring manager might be looking for the very information that the functional resume allows you to avoid putting on your resume. • When you want to emphasize a management growth pattern • When you have performed a limited number of functions in your work. • When your most recent employers have been highly prestigious.
<p>Combination: A combination resume lists your skills and experience first. Your employment history is listed next. With this type of resume you can highlight the skills you have that are relevant to the job you are applying for, and also provide the chronological work history that employers prefer.</p> <p>Be sure to clearly identify what each section is in regards to so that the hiring manager can identify pertinent information readily.</p> <p>Typically, most people who use this format detail their skills and achievements first, and then list their employment history and education in reverse chronological order.</p> <p><i>If you're not sure whether to use a chronological or combination resume, then use the functional resume format.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you've worked for the same company for a long time or held the same type of position for a while, a combination resume allows the reader to see the skills you've accumulated along the way. • If you are making a radical career change, once again, this format places emphasis on achievements and skills first, rather than pointing out that this is a big change in your career path. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you have switched jobs frequently, then the chronological portion of this format still highlights the frequently switching and the timeline gaps in employment history. • If you have unrelated experience or have followed a career path that might seem illogical on the surface, then the chronological portion of this resume would highlight that path. • If you are trying to conceal your age, the combination resume format would give a potential employer enough information to get a rough idea of your age.

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<p>Targeted: A targeted resume is customized so that it specifically highlights the experience you have that is relevant to the job you are applying for. It definitely takes more time to write a targeted resume, but, it's worth the effort, especially when applying for jobs that are a perfect match for your qualifications and experience.</p> <p>The easiest way to target your resume (without rewriting the whole resume) is to include a Resume Summary of Qualifications or Career Highlights section at the top of your resume.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• When you are very clear about your job target.• When you have several directions to go and want a different resume for each.• When you want to emphasize capabilities you possess, but may volunteer experience to perform the job.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• When you want to use one resume for several applications.• When you are not clear about your capabilities and accomplishments.• When you are just starting your career and have little experience.
<p>Curriculum Vitae or CV: A curriculum vitae is used primarily when applying for academic, education, scientific or research positions. It is also applicable when applying for fellowships or grants.</p> <p>A CV includes a summary of your educational and academic backgrounds as well as teaching and research experience, publications, presentations, awards, honors, affiliations and other details.</p> <p>CV's are often used by the academic community instead of resumes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You can tell a potential employer what you want them to know and what you think will get you a job unlike an application form where you have to answer specific questions even if they seem irrelevant.• You can target your language and content to the type of work.• You can use a visual style relevant to the work, e.g. creative appearance for media jobs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Similar in concept to the resume, a curriculum vitae is a longer (up to two or more pages), more detailed synopsis of your background and skills.• The CV is lengthy and does not achieve the goal of resume writing in being brief and concise since, at best; the resume reader will spend a minute or so reviewing your qualifications.

Sending your resume electronically:

Large employment bodies will use 'automated applicant tracking systems' to handle large volumes of resumes in order to match applicant qualifications with employer needs. The resume is scanned and entered into a database so that the personnel department or hiring manager can search via keywords. Therefore, not only should your resume contain all relevant keywords as outlined by the job description, by you must also avoid using fonts and formats that will not scan clearly, such as italics, bold and fancy typefaces.

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What employers want:

Employers say job candidates who have excellent communication skills and relevant work experience impress them. Employers say they want trustworthy new hires that can move right in, get along with their co-workers and get the job done without having to be supervised at each step.

Top 10 Qualities Employers Seek:

1. Communication Skills (verbal and written)
2. Honesty/Integrity
3. Teamwork skills (works well with others)
4. Interpersonal skills (relates well to others)
5. Motivation/initiative
6. Strong work ethic
7. Analytical skills
8. Flexibility/adaptability
9. Computer skills
10. Organizational skills

Now, let's put the resume and the employer together:

There is no magic to getting the job interview that you want, just a great resume. A great resume follows some simple but crucial guidelines.

- Determine who is reading your resume
- Write what the reader wants to hear
- Make your resume easy to read
- Write a resume with substance and depth

1. Determine who is reading your resume

Who is reading your resume? A Human Resource Manager? A Department Manager? That reader knows the type of person they're looking for before they read the deck of resumes in front of them. That Manager is looking for someone with certain experience, certain skills and certain training.

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Your resume is not the only resume on their desk! Remember that the Manager is looking for a specific type of person. They're not going to interview all 50 candidates who applied. They will narrow down the field and interview perhaps 4-5 candidates – you want to be one of those 4-5 candidates.

The Manager knows the type of person they're looking for. They have clearly outlined what they need by posting the necessary 'Skills and Qualifications' in the job description. If you don't try to match your qualifications and experience with what is needed, your resume will be tossed out. If you write about what it is that the Manager is looking for, you will be one of the 4-5 interviewed.

2. Write what the reader wants to hear

It's like when you were in school. You told the teacher what they wanted to hear and you received an A grade. If you didn't tell the teacher what they wanted to hear, another classmate would and they would get the A.

When most people write their resume they are not thinking about what the Manager is looking for, they're thinking about themselves. They write their autobiography. The Manager is not interested in your life story. He or she is not looking for a friend, a spouse or an interesting person. The Manager is looking for someone that demonstrates they can best do the job available.

Regardless of what the Manager is in need of, always be truthful!! Your resume has to be honest, but it also has to focus on the part of your background that is relevant to what the Manager is looking for. Don't be afraid to sell yourself.

If the Manager reading your resume is thinking "big deal, there is nothing here that I need", they will read 1/3 of the page and toss it. If that Manager while reading the resume is thinking "wow...this person is doing exactly what I need", you've got the interview. It should not be a coincidence that the Manager is finding what they are looking for. Your resume needs to tell him or her exactly what they want to hear!

3. Make your resume easy to read

Too many resumes are written in traditional paragraph format that is not easy to read. The Manager has 50-100 resumes and they will not read the paragraphs. They'll scan 1-2 lines of each paragraph and probably will not find what they are looking for because they didn't spend the time reading it.

Writing your resume in bulleted format will enable the Manager to scan your resume.

- Bulleted job descriptions are 3 times faster to read than long paragraph format

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- In 20 seconds they can read a bulleted formatted resume
- It would take 60-90 seconds to read a paragraph format

It's well documented that employers spend only 20 seconds on the initial reading of a resume.

4. Write a resume with substance and depth

Making your resume easy to read doesn't mean simplifying your job descriptions down to 2-3 lines like on many resumes. If you summarize your jobs down to 2-3 lines the Manager will think you are lazy and don't do much on the job. On the other hand, if you give 8-12 bullets describing your recent jobs the Manager will think that you really take on significant responsibilities and are a good employee. The bullet format enables you to say a lot and still be easy to read. Bulleting is a win-win technique. It enables you to say a lot about your jobs and it is still easy to read.

Target steps to writing a great resume:

- Choose your targeted job
- Find out what skills, knowledge and experience are needed to do that job
- Make a list of your strongest skills, abilities and knowledge that make you a good candidate for the particular position
- For each skill, think of several accomplishments from your past work history that illustrate that skill
- Describe each accomplishment in a simple, powerful, action statement that emphasizes the results that benefited your employer
- Always begin with an action verb and arrange your action statements accordingly
- Make a list of the primary jobs you've held in chronological order. Include any unpaid work that fills a gap or that shows you have the skills for the job
- Make a list of your training and education that's related to the new job you want

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King County Employment Document Preferences

Remember: the purpose of your resume is to inform. The purpose of your cover letter is to persuade. If you think in these terms, it may become easier to compose these documents.

Every company or organization has its own preference for what “successful” resumes, cover letters/letters of interest, and applications look like—and King County is no exception. Here are some important points to remember:

DO

- ✓ Use 8 ½ X 11 inch paper
- ✓ Type your documents in a very readable font (Times, Times New Roman, Arial, Helvetica)
- ✓ Verify all personal information, names, dates and places for accuracy
- ✓ Be honest and as detailed as possible
- ✓ Match your skills and qualifications as closely as possible to the position announcement
- ✓ Choose a format and stick to it
- ✓ Put details and categories in logical order i.e.: top to bottom/left to right
- ✓ Make sure your “style” is readable and not too “busy” with over-bolds, italics etc.
- ✓ Let someone you trust proofread AND edit for spelling, grammar, and consistency
- ✓ Make sure your name appears on each page you submit (numeric paging with “1 or 2” is helpful)
- ✓ Include information from the internet application

DON'T

- “Fudge” information, lie, or imply incorrect information
- Share personal/unprofessional/irrelevant information
- Use biased language or indications of prejudice of any kind
- Submit documents that are ragged, torn, completed in marker or otherwise messy

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7 Principles for Effective Resume Writing

Writing any document requires a process. You want to make the best impression possible, so you should be sure to take care in forming any document that is supposed to represent your skills, your work ethic, and your abilities. Here are some important considerations for any professional document you compose.

Principle #1 Plan your document.

You need to make sure you have all the information you need when you sit down to write the resume. You will need your work history information with accurate dates, supervisor names and telephone numbers. You will also want any helpful information such as job descriptions (from your own work history and the jobs to which you will apply), evaluations of your performance, training information, etc.

Principle #2 Know your audience.

Not only should you research the position to which you'll apply, but you should also find out who the audience for your documents will be. You need to compose your document with your readers' needs in mind. What information are they most interested in? Most often, your documents will pass through several hands before an interview, so you need to know your audience to know the kind of language, format and style is most acceptable. This will also help in deciding the flow of your resume.

Principle #3 Be clear and concise.

There could be an enormous stack of applicants for any position. A potential employer will usually spend only moments looking at any single resume. You need to make sure those moments count; information needs to be clear, concise and easily readable. Organize your resume so that information is easy to locate.

Principle #4 Focus each section.

Make sure that each section has a clear focus so that information can be assessed quickly and easily. If a hiring manager or potential employer is looking for your qualifications, he or she should be able to scan them with ease.

Principle #5 Be direct.

You will want to use active language in your resume to guide the perception of your abilities and skills. You should maintain an action oriented language style that remains direct and clear.

Principle #6 Avoid wordiness.

Be sure to edit and revise your resume with this in mind. Are there shorter, more effective ways to restate your information?

Principle #7 Be aware of your language.

You are composing a professional document, so you need to be aware of the language that you use. Maintain a formal diction, avoiding colloquialisms or slang terminology (exceptions: tools and equipment). This is no place for clichés, figures of speech, or

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biased language, so stay informed of politically correct and inclusive language changes (e.g., fire fighter rather than fireman, hours worked rather than man-hours, etc.).

10 MOST COMMON RESUME WRITING MISTAKES

1. Misdirected: too many resumes arrive on employers' desk un-requested and with little or no apparent connection to the organization – cover letters help avoid this.
2. Tries too hard: fancy typesetting and binders, photographs and exotic paper stocks distract from the clarity of the presentation.
3. Spelling, typographical errors, poor grammar: resumes should be carefully proofread before they are printed and mailed.
4. Too many irrelevancies: height, weights, gender, marital status is not needed and may indeed cause problems for the hiring authority.
5. Not oriented for results: doesn't show what the candidate accomplished on the job.
6. Too sparse: gives only base essentials of dates and job titles.
7. Overwritten: long paragraphs and sentences, remember this is meant to be a summary.
8. Poorly typed or printer ink is uneven: looking unprofessional or is hard to read.
9. Disorganized: information is scattered around the page and is hard to follow
10. Too long. Your resume should be no longer than 2 pages.

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RESUME FORMATTING WORKSHEET

Here are some guidelines for formatting your resume!

Guide the Eyes

Use horizontal lines to guide the reader's eyes from top to bottom and to the sections you present. It's easier on the eyes and helps the reader grasp more information quickly.

Prune Your Prose

Long paragraphs don't give the reader much help in finding what they're looking for. Help them find what you want them to see with:

- Bullets and/or tables of information for clarity, and
- Short concise statements that highlight the most important points.

Making an Impression

The idea is to end up with a resume that stands out! Get the attention you need by:

- Ordering sections according to importance or depth of experience
- Using **short**, strong **statements**
- Using bold, clear lettering
- *Supporting* your statements with specific points
- Omitting information that does not support your objective, and
- Avoiding wordiness.

Words to the Wise

A resume is a document that is supposed to provide a lot of information in a small amount of space. It can also supply quick information about your personality. When you've finished a draft, take a look at your resume format and ask yourself:

- Does this get the message about my experience and skills across?
- Does the page give an accurate impression of my personality?
- Can I pick it up and locate the important information immediately?

Don't overdo it! Remember to remain consistent in the resume. Decide which items will be bolded, underlined, italicized or bulleted to avoid a scattered-looking document. You don't want to tire the reader's eyes out.

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EMPLOYMENT WORKSHEET

Let's get started: Interviewing Myself

It helps to ask a few questions of yourself before you sit down to compose your Resume. This worksheet is designed to help you decide on a theme for your documents. Your theme is the topic that ties everything together.

1. What kind of work do I enjoy doing the most?

- Do you like to help people to accomplish something specific?
- Do you enjoy working in a team or independently?

2. What is important about what I do?

- Imagine no one was there to do your work. What issues wouldn't get addressed? What important steps wouldn't take place?

3. What made me a good match for my present job?

- Is your personality a plus for the type of work you do?
- Were you an asset for your specific experience or skills?

4. What makes me a great match for the job to which I'm applying?

- Are you a quick learner?
- Do you require very little supervision?
- Are you able to supervise others?

5. What sets me apart from other candidates?

- Do you have people skills that make you an excellent team player?
- Do you have the experience to train others?

6. What interesting background do I bring to the workplace?

- Do/Did you start your own business?
- Have you worked in a variety of locations?
- Are you bilingual?

Now that you've interviewed yourself, what information would you like to emphasize about you? That information will transfer as your theme and you can brainstorm ideas for structuring, formatting and composing your documents according to that theme. When you're through, revisit this page and ask yourself if the look and sound of your documents reflects your theme.

*Imagine you are explaining to a layperson what you have done. Complete the following categories.
Remember: more is better! Edit later! Consult the Detail Orientation Sheet for ideas.*

NECESSARY INFORMATION (Put this info in the “header” of your document or at least on the 1st page):

NAME: _____
ADDRESS: _____
PHONE: _____
EMAIL: _____

COMPUTER/CUSTOMER SERVICE SKILLS (This information helps with professional/skill summaries):

θ MS Word θ PowerPoint θ WPM: ____ θ 10 key θ MS Excel θ Presentations
θ Databases (specify): _____
θ Telephone: ____ calls/day (max) θ Written/oral communications (mail, memos, etc.)
θ Other(s): _____

PROFESSIONAL/WORK EXPERIENCE (This information helps with professional/skill summaries):

Largest number of people supervised: ____/Length of time: ____ and Position: ____
Check all that apply and indicate the length of time (in months and years):

θ Admin/Secretarial: ____ θ Telecommunications: ____ θ Planning/Design: ____
θ Managerial: ____ θ Mechanical: ____ θ Industrial: ____
θ Financial: ____ θ Business: ____ θ Other: ____

SPECIFIC DUTIES/SKILLS (These items will be bullets for your “Skills & Qualifications”):

What services do you have experience providing? **Be specific.** See Detail Orientation Sheet Action Words.

▪ **Example:** *Schedule weekly appointments and meetings for staff of 8 on Microsoft Outlook calendar*

▪ Action Word: _____
▪ Action Word: _____
▪ Action Word: _____
▪ Action Word: _____
▪ Action Word: _____
▪ Action Word: _____

EDUCATION, CERTIFICATIONS, TRAINING (Begin with most recent information):

Degree/Certificate/Courses	Granting Organization/School	Completed (optional)
Example: AA, Business	Seattle Central Community College	1999
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

EQUIPMENT EXPERIENCE (Separate category for this information or just add it to the summary):

θ Telephones with ____ lines θ Heavy construction equip. _____
θ Equipment up to: ____ GVW θ Buses up to: ____ GVW, articulated? Y N
θ Power/Hand tools: _____
θ Chemicals: _____

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY (List relevant positions and most recent information first):

Position Title	Company (add city/state if necessary)	Month/Year
Example: Custodian	King County Department of Transportation	June 1995 – Present
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

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DRAFT TRANSFER SHEET

Here is where we make the Resume Draft into a reality! Take the information you supplied on the Worksheet and transfer it onto this page. When you finish, you will have the first draft of your resume!

YOUR NAME _____

YOUR ADDRESS _____

YOUR PHONE NUMBER () _____

& EMAIL ADDRESS _____

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS SUMMARY *(computer skills, equipment experience, work experience statements)*

▪	▪	▪
▪	▪	▪
▪	▪	▪

SKILLS & QUALIFICATIONS *(specific duties and skills statements)*

-
-
-
-
-
-

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

<i>Position held/Formal Title</i>	<i>Company Name/Business Organization</i>	<i>start/end dates</i>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

EDUCATION/TRAINING

<i>Degree Title</i>	<i>Name of educational institution/relevant training</i>	<i>start/end dates</i>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

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RESUME DRAFT CHECKLIST

1. ☐ Information fits neatly on page(s).
2. ☐ No spelling, grammar, or punctuation errors
3. ☐ Typing is neat, clean, and professional looking – make sure your printer cartridge is full
4. ☐ Margins are at least one inch wide
5. ☐ Layout makes reading easy
6. ☐ No paragraphs are longer than ten to twelve lines
7. ☐ Important titles are emphasized by underlining, bold or capital letters and not overdone
8. ☐ Action verbs are used to communicate accomplishments and results
9. ☐ Indentions are used to organize information logically
10. ☐ Extraneous and personal information (height, weight, age, etc.) have been omitted
11. ☐ Sentences and paragraphs have been edited to eliminate unnecessary and redundant information
12. ☐ Overall appearance invites you to read it
13. ☐ Resume demonstrates your ability to produce results

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This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.